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Toward a Farmer-Labor Party

By HARRY W. LAIDLER

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Toward a Farmer-Labor Party

BY

HARRY W. LAIDLER



BOOK NOTES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



I. SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

	PAGE
EMERGING FARMER-LABOR PARTIES	4
WHY A FARMER-LABOR PARTY?	5
WHEN A NATIONAL PARTY?	5
PAST FARMER-LABOR DEVELOPMENTS	7
SOME PROBLEMS CONFRONTING FARMER-LABOR ALIGNMENT	8

II. CONCRETE FARMER-LABOR DEVELOPMENTS

IN MINNESOTA	19
WISCONSIN FARMER-LABOR PROGRESSIVE FEDERATION...	25
DETROIT LABOR IN POLITICS	30
THE ILLINOIS LABOR PARTY	33
OHIO AND IOWA	34
OTHER MID-WESTERN STATES	35
THE AMERICAN LABOR PARTY IN NEW YORK	36
THE NEW JERSEY LABOR PARTY	39
PENNSYLVANIA	40
CONNECTICUT	42
CALIFORNIA	42
OREGON	44
WASHINGTON	45
TOWARD A NATIONAL PARTY	46
IN CONCLUSION	53
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	54
BOOK NOTES	56

Toward a Farmer-Labor Party in America

I. SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

AMERICAN labor and farming groups in this country are on the move politically as well as industrially. For decades, students of labor in the United States have been in the habit of contrasting the powerful political parties of labor abroad with the small developments in independent political action at home. Representatives of labor are today the Premiers in the three Scandinavian countries—Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Labor and Socialist parties now constitute the largest single parties in France, Belgium, Switzerland and Finland. In Great Britain, the British Labor party is “His Majesty’s Chief Opposition.” In Holland and Czechoslovakia, the Social Democratic parties constitute the second most powerful political groups in their respective countries. In far off New Zealand, labor in 1935 captured 53 out of the 80 seats in the New Zealand House of Representatives, while in Australia labor governments have for years alternated with conservative governments in the control of that British commonwealth. In Russia, the Communist party dominates. In Spain, since 1931, labor has been a potent force in the political life of the country, though the future is uncertain.

On the other hand, in the United States, the useful workers in the city and rural districts have built no powerful party of their own on a national scale. The Socialist and Communist parties have continued to run Presidential candidates, and have had a marked effect on the economic and political thought of many sections of our population, but have not secured the support at election time of the great mass of the nation’s workers.

Emerging Farmer-Labor Parties

DURING the last few years, however, the growing importance of government in the lives of workers and farmers, our increasing economic insecurity, the marked developments in the field of trade union organization, the advance of the cooperative movement and other forces have led to notable progress toward the building of labor and farmer-labor parties in city, state and nation.

During these years the Farmer-Labor party of Minnesota has continued in control of the government of that state. The Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation of Wisconsin, organized through the initiative of farmer, labor, unemployed, progressive and Socialist groups and functioning through the Progressive party, has become an important factor in the political life of that North Central state. The American Labor party of New York has, almost overnight, assumed leadership in New York City's Council and has become a distinct force in the legislative halls in Albany. In Illinois and New Jersey, state labor parties with considerable labor backing have recently been formed or are in the process of formation. In Detroit, Michigan, a labor slate in 1937 secured nearly 37 per cent of the total votes cast for its candidates in the city elections. In Iowa, a small Farmer-Labor party has run state tickets for several years past.

In about 30 states of the union, Labor's Non-Partisan League has established branches. While in most of these states—as in Pennsylvania and Ohio—the branches are now working through the old parties in an attempt to secure the nomination of “progressive” candidates, in several, where they have been convinced that both old parties are “hopeless,” they are encouraging the formation of a new party and are endeavoring to effect an alliance between farmer and labor groups. In many states, incipient labor and farmer-labor parties, trade unions, Commonwealth Federations, farmers' organizations and Socialist and Communist groups are working toward the development of mass parties on a state-wide or national scale. In its 1937 convention, the Socialist party declared: “The great awakening of the workers requires as its logical next step the development of independent working class political action. The Socialist party, therefore, renews its advocacy and support of a genuine farmer-labor party” and urges its

members "to give all possible support to the proper formation of such a party on a national scale."

Why a Farmer-Labor Party

THE reasons for these developments toward a party of workers of hand and brain on the farms, in the factories, mines, shops and offices are not hard to find. For years labor and the farmer have seen the old parties controlled in the North and the South by entrenched propertied interests and by corrupt political machines. They have witnessed the two-party judiciary handing down decisions which well-nigh paralyzed labor's efforts to organize. They have observed the officers of the law breaking up their meetings and their picket lines and denying them their elementary constitutional rights. They have observed bill after bill, sponsored by labor and the farmers, utterly ignored or emasculated by Republican and Democratic legislators, or, if passed, indifferently enforced.

And they have witnessed America, under the political control of the parties of the propertied interests, subjecting the masses of its people to widespread insecurity, poverty and the threat of war, at a time when the natural resources, machinery and trained labor of the land could, if fully utilized for the common good, ensure a life of abundance and security to all.

When a National Party?

JUST when the forces making for a new political alignment will result in the formation of a national Farmer-Labor party it is impossible to say. Many are now contending that, if President Roosevelt is renominated in 1940, or if the Democrats run a "Roosevelt man," progressive labor and farmers in the main will support the Democratic candidate in that year. This is particularly true, they contend, if the C. I. O. and A. F. of L. have not by that time reached a working agreement. If, on the other hand, labor is again united, and the Democratic party nominates a Presidential candidate unsatisfactory to the leadership of Labor's Non-Partisan League, a new political alignment on a national scale is by 1940 a probability.

There are others who contend that millions of workers in the city and on the farm are rapidly coming to the conclusion that New Deal

Democracy offers no solution for unemployment or for any of the other grave evils of our economic life but, on the other hand, that it is heading this country toward another war. These workers, they assert, are likely to demand by 1940 the formation of a national party of farmers and workers and the participation of this party in the Presidential campaign of that year, irrespective of the character of the Democratic candidate.

To delay the building of a new party of the masses because of the possibility or probability of the selection of a "liberal" candidate by the Democratic party, these students of politics contend, is to repeat the error of past years. "Similar arguments," Oswald Garrison Villard maintains, "have postponed the organization of that third party ever since 1924, when Senator La Follette made his remarkable run and polled nearly five million votes, with little or no money and an organization that was created overnight. . . . Now once more progressives are called upon to stay in the party fold. Frankly, it seems to me shortsighted reasoning. In the first place it is building one's hopes upon a politician, and a politician who is in addition a Roosevelt; and that means something very uncertain. . . . No one can foretell where Franklin Roosevelt will stand in the next three years, particularly if the Republicans should make great gains in next year's elections. . . . For one thing the President is steadily undermining democracy by encouraging the growth of militarism in the United States. Wherever you find large armies and navies, there you find enemies of democracy. Beyond that, the politician in him may make him yield to the Southern reactionaries in his party. I am afraid that the power of those Southern bourbons is under-estimated. . . . There is no evidence that so practical a politician as Mr. Roosevelt will carry the New Deal to the point where he will alienate all the Southern leaders. Yet if we were heading straight for the radical changes we need in our national life he would have to repel them more and more, if not break with them altogether. . . . The Robinsons and Harrisons and other Southern politicians . . . have opposed the anti-lynching bill and the wages-and-hours bill, and they may be counted on to stand fast if any time there should be a real attempt, let us say, to unionize the South, to give some measure of justice to the Negro, or to end the horrors of the share-cropper system. Nor has Mr. Roosevelt yet shown any real

readiness to cut loose from the corrupt Democratic machines in some of our largest cities." *

Past Farmer-Labor Developments

THE present developments toward a farmer-labor party have not been the first attempts of farmers and city workers in America to organize on the political field. In the twenties of the last century, Working's Men's parties were formed in Philadelphia, Boston, New York and other cities to agitate for public schools and to advance labor's interests. In the seventies appeared the Labor Reformers, the Socialist Laborites and the Greenbackers; in the eighties, the United Labor party, under the domination of Henry George and, in 1890, the Populists.

With the dawn of the present century, the Socialist party was formed and nominated Eugene Victor Debs as its Presidential candidate. In 1912, Theodore Roosevelt broke with the Republican party and ran for President on a Progressive party ticket. The Progressive party was distinctly a middle class party, however, with little mass support and, after the campaign, soon ceased to exist as a political entity. Twelve years later the Progressive party was resurrected under the leadership of Robert M. La Follette, this time with such powerful labor and farm backing that many Socialists and others supported it in the hope that it might develop into the mass farmer-labor party of the future.

Despite the vote of nearly 5,000,000 cast for La Follette, however, the strong railroad brotherhoods, which had furnished the backbone of labor support, dropped away from the movement after the election, following certain legislative concessions. Senator La Follette became ill and the movement collapsed.

Other working class political movements organized during the present century were the Communist party, formed in 1919, following a split with the Socialist party, and a small and temporary Farmer-Labor party in 1920. Numerous parties of a more local nature and various "splinter" educational and political groups have made their entrance on the field of political action during the last generation. Socialists and Communists are still actively at work on the national

**The Nation*, Sept. 11, 1937.

field, although the combined votes of the Presidential candidates of minority parties in 1936 constituted only from 2 per cent to 3 per cent of the total.

Many of these political groups have had, directly and indirectly, an effect on legislation unrealized by the average American. "As far as the great body of social legislation enacted during the last thirty years is concerned," writes Charles A. Beard, the country's foremost political scientist, in *American Political Battles*, "it must be confessed that it sprang from movements of opinion quite outside the range of political orthodoxy, that is, from the agitation of minorities winning concessions from the major parties."

The next farmer-labor alignment on the political field of the future, it is hoped, will not only wrest concessions from the old parties in power but will supplant the parties of business with the party of the masses.

Some Problems Confronting Farmer-Labor Alignment

THE building of a strong farmer-labor party in city, state and nation presents many knotty problems.

1. *The Gaining of Legal Status.* One of the first problems arising in connection with the development of a new party is that of obtaining for it a genuine legal status. Rules and regulations governing political parties differ widely as among the states. The American Civil Liberties Union made a study in 1932 of the restrictions imposed by law in the various states on new political alignments. The Union found that, "in most states the minority parties apparently have little difficulty in getting on the ballot . . . nominations are made either by conventions or by petition, but with very different percentages of the number of voters required as backers."

In some states great difficulties are encountered by new parties due to the almost prohibitive number of petitioners required in placing nominees on the ballot; to the refusal of the state to accept petitioners who have registered in the primary of any other party; and to the strict requirements surrounding the holding of state conventions. Many regulations regarding the casting or the counting of ballots are likewise making for difficulties. In New York State it is necessary for

a gubernatorial candidate to receive 50,000 votes, in order that the party may retain its place as a legally recognized party.

The American Civil Liberties Union has drawn up suggestive laws which, if enacted, would make it easier for minority parties to function in some of the states. Every one interested in the development of a labor, farmer-labor, Socialist or other political party representing the interest of the masses in his state, should make a survey of present laws and immediately begin educational and agitational work for improvement. Of course one of the strong arguments against waiting until the beginning of a political campaign before organizing either a state or national party is that, where that is done, it is often too late, because of restrictive legislation, to get the name of the party on that year's ballot.

2. *Structure.* A second problem confronting the organizers of a new political party is how to ensure that the party and its elected officials shall be democratically controlled by those economic groups that obtain their living through their labor of hand or brain and not through ownership of the means of production and distribution. Members of all groups who accept the philosophy of labor and who are willing to work for the objectives of labor should be admitted to the party, but the mass control should be in the hands of workers in industry and on the soil.

Abroad labor parties are in general of three types. On the Continent, most of the labor and social democratic parties are based primarily upon individual membership, chiefly a working class membership with a socialistic philosophy. Most trade unionists belong to such a party. There is generally a working agreement between the trade unions and the party, but there is no integral relationship, except at times, through local affiliations. In Belgium, the party is controlled by a triple alliance of trade unions, cooperatives and a socialist political organization.

In Great Britain may be found a federated party, with trade unions dominating the machinery. In the beginning, the party made place for no individual membership, but only for federated groups. Its executive in 1903 consisted of 13 members, 9 from trade unions, 2 from the Independent Labor party, a socialist political organization, and one from the Fabian Society, a Socialist educational group. For a while

the Social Democratic Federation, a Marxian group, was a member. In 1918, as a result of a demand from many who wished to serve the party directly and not indirectly through affiliated organizations, the constitution provided for the organization of the party on a double basis of national labor and socialist bodies and branch party organizations, the latter enrolling individually men and women who subscribed to the party constitution and program. At present, the national executive committee, the governing committee of the party between annual conferences, consists of 25 members elected by the conference delegates, of which 12—nearly half—are nominees of trade union bodies; 7, nominees of labor party branches, federations and central bodies; 5, women members, and 1, a nominee of Socialist, co-operative and professional organizations. Since the setting up of individual branches, members of these branches, who constitute the party's most active membership, have demanded increasing representation on the executive committee. Many have vigorously criticized the bloc system of voting which gave to a few affiliated trade unions with a large membership a controlling voice in important party decisions. In the 1937 conference of the Labor party, the representation of individual branches on the executive was increased from 5 to 7.

In the United States, the Farmer-Labor party of Minnesota is organized in that state on an individual basis. The state committee of the Farmer-Labor Association, the governing body of the party, consists of 2 representatives elected from each of the 9 Congressional districts of the state, and, in addition, 3 officers elected by the state convention. The county committees of the association, however, contain representatives from numerous trade union, farmer and other organizations, as well as from the ward clubs.

The American Labor party, a New York State party of labor, was organized in 1936 as a federated party consisting of numerous labor and educational groups. In 1937, it reorganized, its chief governing body, under its new constitution, being divided into an equal number of committeemen chosen by its branch organizations and of members selected by trade unions. The party made this change partly because of the continuous pressure brought to bear upon it to admit representatives of new groups to the committee and partly in the belief that many representatives of specific groups were there to represent

in the party councils not the point-of-view of the membership as a whole, but of that of their own special groups. The composition of the state committee might further change after the party operates under the legal provisions to which older parties are subject.

From the standpoint of Socialist and other groups, the advantage of a federated party is that each important group is likely to be represented on its governing board. However, under such a form, the rank-and-file membership of each group is not likely to rub shoulders with the members of the party as a whole and may well develop an undesirable sectarianism. If, on the other hand, all members of the mass party become members of its branch organizations, each group is likely the better to appreciate the point-of-view of the general run of party members.

Whatever the form chosen for representing the will of the masses in these organizations, the particular organizational structure adopted has usually been developed with the view of keeping control in the hands of the working class and farmer membership or leadership and of preventing the party from becoming a nebulous "liberal" or "progressive" organization with no class basis or from being employed as an instrument to keep in power a few political leaders.

One of the chief criticisms of the Progressive party of Wisconsin by trade unionists, farmers, cooperators and unemployed who organized the Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation of that state was that there was no method, prior to the organization of the Federation, whereby the masses could exert any control over the party's policies or its elected officials. The Federation members desired not a "La Follette" political movement but a farmer-labor movement.

Where trade union, farmer and other groups dominate the party, however, there frequently arises another problem, the problem of how it is possible to prevent officers of trade union and farm organizations with large membership from disregarding the wishes of the active rank and file members of the party, and from forcing the party to follow policies which, while serving the immediate interests of their respective trade union or farm groups, or the interests of the leadership of those groups, run counter to the larger purposes and ideals of the movement as a whole.

On the other hand, in the farmer-labor movement, there is the

problem of preventing minority groups within the party from inducing the movement to adopt their policies not as a result of democratic discussion and persuasion, but as a result of undemocratic maneuvering. Such tactics, while temporarily successful, are, in the end, likely to drive the mass membership away from the party and leave the movement in the control of small and ineffectual ideological groups. Following the organization of a farmer-labor party, the members of the party are likely to experiment with many forms of party organization before arriving at a satisfactory democratic structure.

3. *Independence from Old Parties.* A third problem of pressing importance in any farmer-labor alignment is the party's relation to the Republican and Democratic political organizations. In the beginning of most such movements, there are many who urge the endorsement of old party candidates. This was the case in the early days of the Labor Representation Committee of Great Britain, the forerunner of the British Labor party. In 1903, three years after the formation of this committee, Keir Hardie, at the L.R.C. conference, warned the trade unionists of the dangers of associating themselves with the Liberals and Tories of those days. "Let them beware," said the British miner, "lest they surrender themselves to Liberalism, which would shackle them, gag them, and leave them a helpless and impotent mass." Following the discussion of the party's policy, the conference, by an overwhelming vote, declared that "it regards it as being absolutely necessary that the members of the executive committee and officials of affiliated organizations should strictly abstain from identifying themselves with, or promoting the interests of, any section of the Liberal or Conservative parties, inasmuch as if we are to secure the social and economic requirements of the industrial classes, labor representatives in and out of Parliament will have to shape their own policy and act upon it regardless of other sections in the political world." *

Three years later, in 1906, the L.R.C. evolved into the British Labor party. The party since that year has in general stood foursquare on the platform of independent labor action. Herbert Morrison recently declared on this question: "We [in Great Britain] sought to fight every election, everywhere, every time. We were strict-

*M. Beer, *History of British Socialism*, pp. 335, 337.

ly independent of all political parties. We did not back candidates of other parties. We stood on our own feet, found our own funds, framed our own policy and fought all comers." †

How such independence can be acquired and maintained by the state farmer-labor parties and the emerging national party of the masses is one of the most important problems which a new alignment has to face. In the United States, one of the main arguments used in favor of support of candidates of old parties is that such candidates, at the inception of the party, have a better chance of election than have independent farmer-labor nominees. This, of course, is frequently true. But the question arises, "Does the endorsement of an old party candidate by a farmer-labor party genuinely assist in building a political party of the masses?" Such old party candidates run not on the platform of the farmer-labor party, but of the Republican or Democratic party. They usually attend the caucuses of their own party, not of the farmer-labor party, and, in their actions in the legislature, are bound by these caucuses and by the powers-that-be in the old parties. There is no assurance that they will advance fundamental legislation desired by the farmer-labor movement. When bestowing patronage, while they may throw a few crumbs in the form of jobs in the direction of members of the labor party, the main administrative positions are given to old party politicians, for it is to the old party, not the farmer-labor party, that they must look for their political future. Even when these old party candidates give jobs to farmer-laborites, it is usually with a view of building up their own political machines, not the farmer-labor movement. And, frequently, after helping to elevate an old party candidate, through labor's endorsement, to a high political position, the farmer-labor party finds that it has "built up" a political figure who, as a representative of a capitalist party in subsequent elections, might be in a position greatly to retard the development of a party of the masses. The farmer-labor party, by such political trading, thus tends to perpetuate the "good-man" concept in politics.

Moreover, when a farmer-labor party throws its support to a capitalist party candidate, it is difficult for it in the same campaign to put forward with vigor the main arguments for the existence of,

†See *New Leader*, April 17, 1937.

and the imperative need for, a party of labor of hand and brain. The necessity of urging the election of candidates of capitalist parties on the same ticket with independent farmer-labor candidates leads to endless confusion in the presentation of party policy. Nor can the habit of trading candidates with old parties be easily broken off when it once gets a good hold on the party's officialdom. In striving to make a showing at the next election, farmer-laborites should beware lest they ruin the party's chances for growth over the next decade.

4. *Trade Union Unity*, A fourth problem before labor in politics is that of the attainment of unity on the industrial field. Today wide cleavages exist in the ranks of labor. Such cleavages as that between the C. I. O. and the A. F. of L., which had their origin in 1935, make for tremendous difficulties on the political field. A labor organization at war with fellow unionists on the trade union front is not likely to give an enthusiastic response when asked to cooperate with these same unionists on the political front. The success or failure of a labor or a farmer-labor party might well depend on labor's ability to get together industrially.

5. *Farmer and the City Worker*. An even more important problem facing the new political alignment is that of bringing about a genuine understanding between city and agricultural producers of hand and brain. Fundamentally, the economic relationships of the farmer are the same as those of the city worker. Both are the essential factors in their respective industries, without whose labor production would cease. Both are exploited by those who live primarily by owning and not by working. But, throughout the history of the nation, the industrialists and financiers have sought to divide the city workers and farmers. They have constantly attempted to align the farmers on the side of the capitalist groups in the community and to develop among them a "capitalist psychology," even though the vast proportion of the nation's farmers in "good" times and bad, eek out but an existence and are dependent upon industrialists and financiers who seek to fix the price of everything the farmer buys and everything the farmer sells. It is the task of the advocates of a farmer-labor party to emphasize the common interests of farmers and industrial workers; to develop a program of mutual advantage to labor and agriculture and

to see that labor and the farmers meet each other half way in the solution of their common problems.

6. *City Groups.* Even when city workers are united on the industrial field, techniques have to be devised for preventing the differences and misunderstandings among the various occupational and ideological groups from retarding the growth of the party. In the recently formed American Labor party, during the 1937 campaign, vigorous rivalry developed among numerous powerful trade unions. This rivalry frequently led to the naming of candidates not on the basis of merit but on that of membership in a particular trade union. Numerous conflicts developed among trade unionists interested purely in immediate demands, followers of the Socialist and Communist schools of thought, and those who joined with little other thought in mind than that of patronage. Similar conflicts have developed in the Minnesota, Wisconsin and other movements, and to prevent these conflicts from seriously retarding the growth of the movement requires a high degree of intelligence, statesmanship, and social idealism.

A problem facing most farmer-labor parties, likewise, is the place of the small business man within its ranks. Some business men join with labor political groups because they are convinced that there is no security under a competitive system, and that they must unite with the masses to inaugurate a planned society. These elements may be distinct assets to any labor party. Others, on the other hand, ally themselves with labor for the purpose of inducing labor to join with them in a general "trust busting" campaign, a campaign against big business, in behalf of the restoration of small industry. Intelligent labor, however, realizes that all such efforts in the past have led to futility; that, even though big business were smashed, and industry were returned to the "horse and buggy" stage, insecurity and poverty would still be the heritage of the masses. Not in trust busting, but in community ownership lies labor's salvation. Control of labor party policy by the small merchant class anxious to turn back the wheels of industry leads to nothing but confusion. Merchant groups animated with this purpose constitute a danger to any healthy growth of labor or farmer-labor partyism. Labor must not confuse a campaign in behalf of the restoration of small industry with progressivism or

radicalism. Not in pulling apart the machine or the large corporate units, but in owning and directing it, lies labor's salvation.

7. *Encouragement of Local Parties.* Still another question perplexing advocates of a national farmer-labor party is, "How valuable to the masses are local and state farmer-labor parties organized prior to the establishment of a national party?"

Some advocates of a farmer-labor alignment feel that local parties should be discouraged until the country is ready for a national set-up. They point to the fact that, when city and state-wide parties exist, without any corresponding national equivalent, political trading with the old parties is almost sure to take place. They likewise maintain that, when a local farmer-labor party is in power, but when the state is in the hands of a party of propertied interests, state legislatures, administrators and courts can usually be depended upon greatly to restrict the power of the municipality to tax its citizens, to expand its social services and to municipalize its utilities. The national government and its courts can also do much to thwart a state farmer-labor government in the development of a labor program. Moreover, most fundamental social problems can be dealt with adequately only on a national scale. Thus, such students declare, it is hardly worth while building local and state parties unless they receive national support.

However, state parties possess various significant values. No national party has a chance to succeed, unless it has as its foundation a considerable number of powerful local and state movements. Local and state parties serve as an indispensable barometer of the desire of various sections of the country for independent political action. They provide a rich fund of experience and training to farmer-labor party workers, legislators and administrators, training that can later be utilized to marked effect in the national field. Despite handicaps, they make possible the enactment of legislation in the fields of social services, public utilities, taxation, civil liberties, labor and agriculture of very considerable importance to the life of the people. When labor and minority groups are denied the rights of free speech, peaceful assembly and peaceful means of organization, it is not usually the federal government, but the city or state government that is responsible for that denial. The control of the political machinery of these governments is, therefore, of the utmost importance to the masses in

their struggle for better conditions. Such control, furthermore, is frequently necessary to ensure an honest count for national candidates of a farmer-labor party when such a party emerges. It is difficult, in fact, to overestimate the value of local farmer-labor parties of a genuinely independent nature to the new national alignment.

8. *Immediate and Ultimate Program.* Of a somewhat different nature is the problem, in any farmer-labor party, of the relative positions which immediate demands and far-flung social goals should occupy in the platforms and program of the coming alignment. Socialist and Communist parties and most of the educational organizations lately formed to stimulate farmer-labor political action have usually urged both a series of legislative measures for raising living standards here and now, and the steady advance toward "a system of production for use and not for profit."

Many labor parties in the past, on the other hand, have, in their initial stages, kept themselves "free from commitments to any integrated social philosophy." * This was the case with the British Labor party, in its first years of development. "It had no final goal, but immediate aims; it did not occupy itself with theories, but with practical measures."† As the years progressed, however, platforms became increasingly socialistic in their pronouncements, and, in 1918, toward the end of the World War, the party adopted a constitution which declared that the B.L.P. aimed, among other things, "to secure for the workers by hand and by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service." It aimed "generally to promote the political, social and economic emancipation of the people, and more particularly those who depend directly upon their own exertions by hand or by brain for the means of life."‡ These provisions are a part of the British Labor party constitution today.

A number of our labor and farmer-labor parties in the United States today urge a rather fundamental change to a system of "pro-

**Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 8, p. 697.

†Beer, *History of British Socialism*, Vol. II, p. 334.

‡*Ibid.*, p.397

duction for use." Most believers in a socialized order would, of course, be happy to see all new political parties come out fearlessly for a cooperative social order. These advocates of a new social order, in the early stages of a mass party, are, however, more desirous of having such a party adopt a platform which will win the allegiance of the masses than one which, while committing the party to the attainment of a new economic system, alienates large mass support. "A socialized order of industry," say these students, "is the logical goal of the nation's workers. Only under such an system will city workers and the farmers be able to secure the full fruits of their toil and will security, equal opportunity, industrial and political democracy, comfort and peace be the possession of all. Thus, when once labor and farmers are organized and function effectively on the political field, there is no other path on which they can logically travel than the path to a cooperative system. The most important thing, therefore, at the initiation of a labor or farmer-labor party, is the effective mobilization of the masses in a political movement, not a completely anti-capitalist platform. Once the masses are set in motion politically, their acceptance of a more ultimate social goal is only a matter of time, given experience and strong, intelligent and socially-visioned leadership. On the other hand, without mass support, no party, no matter what its platform, can achieve a complete economic change in our property relationships."

"Therefore Socialists and other believers in a cooperative commonwealth," continue these students, "should not make the acceptance by a farmer-labor party of a completely anti-capitalist program a necessary preliminary to their cooperation. On the other hand, the growing insecurity of our social system is rapidly leading the masses in many parts of the country to the conclusion that the profit system must be abandoned, and the acceptance by them of a program pointing to fundamental economic change seems to be only a matter of time."

9. *Other Problems.* Numerous further problems of organization and of policies arise, among which not the least important is the attitude of the labor party to the international scene. The tendencies of many labor and farmer-labor parties have been either to ignore international problems, or to accept the philosophy, as in the case of

Australia, of economic nationalism. The task of mass movements in the United States is that of doing everything possible to keep this country out of war, and, at the same time, to work for an international policy which will attack the fundamental causes of war—economic, social and political. In the successful solution of the foregoing vital problems that are likely daily to challenge the coming party of farmers and city workers of hand and brain may well lie the future of our civilization here and abroad.

II CONCRETE FARMER-LABOR DEVELOPMENTS

IN THE previous section, we have discussed in a brief manner some of the principal problems which are facing and will, in the future, face state and national parties of labor and the farmers. In this section, let us take a glance at the actual developments toward new political alignments of the masses that may be observed in various states of the nation.

In Minnesota

THE most conspicuous of these developments is that of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor party. This party first entered the political arena in 1918, during the World War, following the failure of the Non-Partisan League of Minnesota to secure the Republican gubernatorial nomination for the progressive Congressman, Charles A. Lindbergh, Sr., father of the aviator. The party had its first important electoral success in 1922 when it elected its first United States Senator. Eight years later, in 1930, it elected its outstanding leader, Floyd B. Olson, Governor of the state and in subsequent years re-elected him until his death in 1936. In that year's campaign, it placed Elmer A. Benson, a vigorous fighter for farmers and city workers, in the Governor's chair. Today (1938) the Farmer-Labor party is in control of the state administration and of the Lower House of the legislature, while the two Senators from the state and five out of the nine Congressmen are representatives of that party.

As the one farmer-labor party in the nation in control of the state government, the Minnesota Farmer-Labor party is worthy of study. Structurally the party is controlled by the Farmer-Labor Association. The Constitution provides that "candidates endorsed by the Farmer-

Labor Association must support all other candidates so endorsed and must not endorse or support any other candidates not officially endorsed by the Farmer-Labor Association."

"All candidates," continues its constitution, "stand instructed by the Farmer-Labor Association at all times to urge all workers and farmers to join their respective trade union, farmers' economic organizations and the association." There is no provision in the rules and regulations of the two old parties remotely resembling this provision.

"Candidates in their campaigns must publicly pledge themselves to utilize their office, if elected, to protect the right of farmers and workers to join their respective bona fide organizations without discrimination and their right to collective bargaining."

The membership of the Association is open to "all organizations of men and women accepting the program and principles of the Farmer-Labor Association, provided, however, that no persons nor any political nor economic organization advocating change by means of force or by means of revolution or advocating any other than a representative form of government shall be admitted to membership."

The party's constitution specifically provides that nothing in it shall be construed "as abridging the autonomy of affiliated organizations, except as they have pledged their cooperation in political campaigns and have agreed to aid in the conduct of campaigns as directed by the state committee."

Conventions of the party are called in even numbered years in March for campaign purposes and in January of odd numbered years, for purposes of organization, education and legislation.

The supreme governing body of the party between conventions is the state committee. This committee consists of the state chairman, vice-chairman and secretary-treasurer, elected annually at the state convention and eighteen committeemen, two from each of the nine Congressional districts, chosen by Congressional district conventions held prior to the state conventions. An executive committee is chosen to conduct routine business between the quarterly meetings of the committee.

In each county, the affairs of the Association are conducted by a committee consisting partly of representatives from the various

Farmer-Labor ward clubs in the county and partly of delegates from affiliated trade union, farmers' and other organizations. The conventions of the counties are attended by delegates representing ward clubs and the affiliated organizations. At the 1937 convention of the Minneapolis farmer-laborites, delegates likewise were seated from unaffiliated organizations. This led to a considerable amount of controversy as to the possible packing of the convention and may result in a change of rules on the part of the Association in that city.

Governor Benson sees in a Farmer-Labor party something different from a mere third party of the type of some Progressive parties of the past "in which a few leaders do the organizing from on top, and by means of some new slogans and new political faces develop a tremendous following of voters for those who aspire to political power."

"A real Farmer-Labor party," declares Governor Benson, "is one that is based upon labor unions, militant farm groups, cooperatives, the organized un-employed, and political clubs which are a device for expressing on the political front the economic needs of the masses—the tenant and operating farmers, the white collar, manual, and professional workers, and the small merchant.

"All these people have *one great economic need in common*— they need to protect themselves against further exploitation by organized wealth. . . . In a Farmer-Labor party, the bottom is organized as well as the top; and the top is only the expression of the organized base. Such a party, in its very foundation, has made certain economic choices; that is why it can make corresponding choices on the political front."* The party is thus a *class party*, not a party seeking to represent equally men and women of the owning and of the working class.

Its basis is not only that of farmers and workers, but its ultimate goal is that of fundamental change to "a system of planned plenty." "Natural resources and monopolized industries essential to our national life and well being," reads the 1936 platform, "must ultimately be collectively owned and democratically controlled and operated, to the end that democracy shall prevail in our industrial life as well as in our political life."

The type of immediate legislation for which the party is contending

**New Leader*, Sept. 4, 1937, italics mine.

is indicated by that urged by Governor Benson in his first legislative message. In this message he pleaded for a constitutional amendment to enable the state to produce electricity and sell it to municipalities for their own retailing and distribution and to enact minimum wage and maximum hour laws. He recommended the setting up of a state Public Housing Authority; the conservation of state resources; the creation of a state planning board and of a Consumers' Research Bureau within the Department of Agriculture; the public ownership of liquor stores; the establishment of a state-owned cement plant; the lowering of the legal rate of interest from six to four per cent; the registration of paid lobbyists; the repeal of the criminal syndicalist law; the election of legislative candidates as members of political parties rather than as individuals; laws for the aid of cooperatives; the prohibition of the importation of thugs and strike-breakers in labor disputes; the adoption of a state policy whereby preference would be given in the granting of contracts to firms adhering to the principle of collective bargaining and the paying of union wages; extension of the mortgage moratorium law and the taxation of chain farms—62 per cent of the farmers in Minnesota are now operating as tenants.

Governor Benson likewise urged the organization of a state youth commission with power to determine the actual needs and conditions of youth; the formation of social, recreational and employment centers, particularly in the rural areas; the expansion of the college aid program; free transportation to all rural high school pupils; greater security to the teaching profession; compliance with the federal security act and a better tax system, including higher taxes on iron ores leased by the state to private corporations and higher income taxes. During the last few years the fight in the legislature over the increase in income and profit taxes has led to one of the most extensive parliamentary battles in the recent history of Minnesota.

The leaders of the party have time and again urged the formation of a national Farmer-Labor party and have been active in promoting the organization of state parties in the Northwest and in laying the foundation for a country-wide set-up.

"It is recognized," declares the Farmer-Labor Association in its declaration of principles, "that the great agricultural and industrial

problems of Minnesota are nation-wide in extent and influence and must be ultimately solved by national action. This necessitates the organization of a national movement of the wealth producers to effect the fundamental changes essential to the solution of these problems. For this reason the farmer-labor movement of Minnesota is committed to support and to cooperation with the national farmer-labor movement."

Many of the leaders of the party are now contending that only through the building of a national party will it be possible to maintain and advance for any considerable period of time a state farmer-labor organization.

The party has achieved much to date along legislative lines especially in the field of taxation, despite the control of the upper house of the legislature by the Republican party. It has consistently fought for the imposition of taxes in accordance with the principle of ability to pay. It has greatly improved many state departments. The accomplishments of the Department of Education under the supervision of Commissioner John G. Rockwell are noteworthy. The party's chief achievement, however, has been its demonstration that farmers and industrial workers can be welded together in a powerful and victorious farmer-labor political alignment, in spite of differences between them.

The party has yet to solve many pressing problems. There is the question of its relationship with the national Democratic party. In 1936, the Democrats withdrew their candidates for state offices on condition that the farmer-laborites would support the national Democratic ticket. This led to resentment among many of the party members who believed that such a course was utterly inconsistent with the philosophy of a party dedicated to the control of city, state and nation by workers of hand and brain. This problem is not likely to be solved until the organization of a national farmer-labor party.

Another problem with which the Minnesota party is still contending is that of old party patronage. During a number of campaigns, an All-Party Committee has been set up, which included many prominent Republicans and Democrats who, while not belonging to the Farmer-Labor party, decided, in that particular campaign, to support certain leading Farmer-Labor candidates. Some of these Republicans and Democrats, after the campaign, were provided with important posi-

tions, though out of sympathy with the main principles of the party. This has not only caused considerable friction within the party, but has given old party politicians a hold on the state's machinery which might well seriously retard the future growth of the party.

The experience of the Minnesota state party has indicated that there are a number of other dangers to be avoided in any such movement. Any party, when successful, is likely to be infested with those who desire not social progress, but individual patronage. Patronage seekers are a power to contend with here. Utility and liquor interests have likewise been actively at work throughout the existence of the party in trying to influence the votes of the party's representatives. In some of the large cities, they have been not altogether unsuccessful.

In the past, the party undoubtedly accepted campaign contributions from some interests which demanded their pay after election. The party has not been as successful as has the A.L.P. in New York in securing large contributions from labor unions. Some method must be devised of financing the party without accepting any funds from questionable sources.

In some localities the psychology of small merchant groups has tended too much to color the party's actions. In many sections labor and farmers have left the control of boards of education to the conservatives of the community who have made it difficult to discuss vital social problems in the public schools.

The party has here as elsewhere a definite problem in reconciling the interests of farmers and city workers. The lack of party designation for members of the legislature has made it difficult for the party leaders to keep many of the farmer-laborites in line after election. Other questions with which the Farmer-Labor party is now grappling include that of control of the party's organs; the problem of building an adequate press—the movement has no such dailies as are found in Wisconsin in the *Milwaukee Leader* and in the *Capital Times*; the problem of effective educational programs in party ward clubs; the question of leadership following the loss of the party's dynamic leader, Governor Olson; the problem of how adequately to reward able party workers and, at the same time, to strengthen the state's civil service system and the question of preventing the conflicting ideologies and tactics of radicals and liberals among the workers and farmers from

making impossible concentration on the important tasks immediately at hand. The least satisfactory phase of the Farmer-Labor party's activities is found in its city administrations. It can thus far point to no Farmer-Labor Mayor of the calibre of Daniel W. Hoan of Milwaukee or to any city administration conducted on as high a level. In Minneapolis, the bitter antagonism between the trade union and other groups under the influence of so-called "Trotskyists" and "Stalinists" respectively has recently caused much confusion in the political movement in that city.

A distinct need of the party today is an ever increasing group of vigorous, honest, intelligent, constructive idealists among farmers and city workers who are dedicated not to the securing of jobs, or the advancement of any sect, but to the continued development of a powerful political instrument of the masses and to the attainment of a free and abundant state and nation. But despite all unsolved problems before the Minnesota movement, the Farmer-Labor party in that state has shown a vigor, a progressiveness and an ability to weld together city and rural groups of divergent backgrounds that give no little promise for the future of the farmer-labor movement.

Wisconsin Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation

IN MINNESOTA'S sister state, Wisconsin, significant developments have lately taken place. The long record of achievement of the Socialists of Milwaukee under the leadership of Victor L. Berger, Daniel W. Hoan and others is too well known to require repetition here. Mayor Hoan celebrated his twentieth anniversary as Mayor of the City of Milwaukee in 1936, and friends and foes alike at that time joined in declaring that he had given Milwaukee an administration that, for honesty and common sense, had scarcely been equalled in American municipal government.

In Wisconsin at large, the La Follettes controlled for many years the Republican party. In 1932, however, Philip La Follette failed to obtain the Republican nomination for Governor, although running for reelection, while Senator John J. Blaine, Wisconsin's progressive Senator, was defeated in the primary race for the Senatorial nomination by the red-baiter, John Chapple. Two years later, the La Follettes

broke with the Republican party and formed the Wisconsin Progressive party at a convention which they completely controlled.

The Progressive party adopted a moderate reform platform and, in the elections of 1934, was successful in returning Robert La Follette to the Senate and Philip to the gubernatorial chair (although with a small plurality), in electing 7 out of 10 Congressmen, and in winning a majority of seats in the Lower House of the legislature, though not in the Upper House). In Milwaukee, the Socialists elected three Assemblymen, but no Senators, the liberal and radical vote being divided between Socialists and Progressives. The Republicans won five Senatorial seats from Milwaukee in the state legislature.

The failure of progressives to elect a sufficient number of representatives of the Socialist and Progressive parties from Milwaukee County brought about the defeat of the Labor Relations Bill in the legislature in 1935, a bill which was the major goal of the State Federation of Labor. In the meanwhile, Socialists had been unable for years to obtain a working majority in the Milwaukee City Council.

This situation led labor, Socialists and Progressives to consider a possible merger of progressive and radical forces for electoral purposes. Another situation also led farmers and labor to suggest an amalgamation of forces. When the Progressive party was formed, there were many, particularly in the ranks of labor, who had urged upon the La Follettes a different type of party, a farmer-labor party. For years, the Wisconsin Federation of Labor had been known as one of the most progressive of the state federations in the country. The preamble of its declaration of principles declared that the Federation's ultimate goal was the establishment of a cooperative commonwealth. The Federation time and again supported the Socialist party in political campaigns. It lent its aid to promising attempts during the twenties to organize a national labor party. When the La Follette brothers called a convention at Fond du Lac to organize the Progressive party in 1934, representatives of the Federation and of many farm groups urged the formation of a genuine farmer-labor party, democratically controlled, and having as its objective a system of production for use. Toward the conclusion of the Fond du Lac convention, J. J. Handley, secretary of the Federation, an observer, expressed his dissatisfaction that the party had adopted no program,

had made no provision for democratic control and had refused to name the organization, the Wisconsin Farmer-Labor party. This dissatisfaction was voiced by most members of the Federation.

A year later, both because of the failure of labor to secure desired labor legislation and the increased demand for a genuine party of farmers and workers, the Federation directed the officers to call together the progressive farm, labor and political elements in the state to see what could be done to unify them politically.

The officers called a conference for October 1, 1935, with two delegates each from nine Wisconsin organizations, including the Federation of Labor, the Farmers' Holiday Association, the Farmers' Equity Union, the Wisconsin Cooperative Milk Pool, the Progressive party, the Socialist party, the Farmer-Labor Progressive League—known as the left wing of the Progressive party—the Wisconsin Workers Alliance and the Railroad Brotherhoods. It was said that at least one member of every farm or workers' family in Wisconsin was connected, either as a member or sympathizer, with one or more of the conferring organizations, which represented a membership of about half of the voting population of the state.

Those present at the conference were unanimous in their criticisms of certain defects, as they saw them, in the Progressive party. This party, they declared, did not hold conventions which nominated candidates and adopted platforms. Under its procedure, as many candidates as desired a nomination, on fulfilling certain conditions, could run in the primaries. The candidates who won out got together and prepared their own platform. There were no dues paying party members. "And after electing Progressives," declared the delegates, "we have to go out and beg the legislators to support measures endorsed by our groups. We have little tangible hold on these representatives. Furthermore, the present Progressive party lends itself to domination by a few political leaders for their own political aggrandizement." The delegates thus decided that a new type of political grouping was necessary. A larger conference was called for Milwaukee for November 30, 1935, with 25 delegates from each of the nine groups.

The November conference organized the Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation. It adopted a militant declaration of principles which,

following the lead of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor party, committed the party to a new social order. "This Farmer-Labor Federation," the statement read, "proposes to change the present economic system based primarily on production for profit to an economic system based primarily on production for use. Production for use means that the basic monopolistically-controlled industries shall be cooperatively or publicly owned. Therefore, organized Wisconsin workers, farmers and other liberal and progressive forces join together in a federation for political education and action." The delegates likewise adopted a labor and farm state program which followed rather closely former platforms of the Socialist party and laid down the basis for local and state organization.

The units of the Federation, the convention decided, would be the individual members, organized in branches and paying minimum dues of \$1.00 a year. When an already existing political group wished to retain its identity, even though cooperating with the Federation, such an organization could be affiliated on a group basis and given representation in the party committees on the basis of membership.

The constitution adopted by the delegates provides for the holding of Federation conventions every June, with delegates apportioned to the counties on the basis of membership. It contains provisions for a state executive board of 15 members to be elected at the state convention, one from every Congressional district, and the remainder from the state-at-large.

Candidates are to be nominated at Federation conventions. All candidates thus nominated are required, by the provisions of the constitution, publicly to pledge themselves to the principles and platform of the Federation. "Candidates nominated for office by the Federation," the constitution adds, "must not endorse or support any other candidate for state or local office in opposition to a candidate nominated by the Federation."

One of the most vigorously fought controversies in the convention revolved around the party name. The Socialist delegates urged that a new party, a Farmer-Labor party, be organized separate and apart from either the Progressive or the Socialist party. Their opponents argued that the creation of such a party would involve much legal and technical difficulty. Socialists thereupon urged that members of the

Federation enter their nominees in the primaries of the Socialist party. The Socialist party, they maintained, was a long established force in the state, and was highly regarded for its integrity, practical achievement and social idealism. In opposition to this argument, it was contended that it would be difficult to persuade large numbers of farmers and free lance progressives to vote in the Socialist column. The convention finally decided to function through the Progressive, rather than through the Socialist primaries. This decision, in the nature of the case, did not apply to national tickets, the Socialists retaining the right to maintain their own column for Presidential electors.

In the summer of 1936, the Federation endorsed all candidates for state offices except for Governor. Philip La Follette had decided not to become a Federation member and the Federation voted neither to nominate nor to oppose him. The Federation candidates for Lieutenant Governor and Treasurer were defeated in the primaries. In the general election, all Progressives on the state ticket were elected, including the Federation members, the Attorney General and Secretary of State. Twenty-eight Federation Assemblymen were successful, and several state Senators. Nine of the 28 Assemblymen were members of the Socialist party. In the ensuing session of the Assembly, a Federation member, Paul Alfonsi, was elected speaker of the House and a Socialist, Andrew Biemiller, the principal floor leader. The Federation Progressives in the 1937 session of the Legislature were in the very forefront of the fight for labor and farm legislation. Following the completion of this session, a record was compiled of the support given by Republican, Democratic, Non-Federation Progressives and Federation Progressive Assemblymen of measures advocated by the Wisconsin Federation of Labor and by the Farmers' Legislative Committee. The Federation Progressives topped both lists. The percentages were as follows:

PERCENTAGES ALLOTTED TO ASSEMBLYMEN ON BILLS
ADVOCATED BY WISCONSIN FEDERATION OF LABOR
(1000 regarded as a perfect record)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Percentage with absences ignored</i>	<i>Percentage with absences counted as a vote against</i>
Federation Progressives	920	841
Non-Federation Progressives	666	568
Democrats	472	423
Republicans	314	243

PERCENTAGES ON AGRICULTURAL ROLL CALL OF THE FARMERS' LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Percentage with absences ignored</i>	<i>Percentage with absences counted as a vote against*</i>
Federation Progressives	913	840
Non-Federation Progressives	869	790
Democrats	485	413
Republicans	454	356

Many Federation Progressives were given by labor and farm groups a "perfect" record.

Leaders of the Federation are actively engaged in promoting a national Farmer-Labor party. The Federation has set up a committee to work with committees from Farmer-Labor groups in other states, primarily in Minnesota and Illinois, to assist in building state parties in the West and Northwest, with the ultimate view of creating a national party. Daniel W. Hoan is the chairman of the tri-state Farmer-Labor Committee and is one of the outstanding supporters of the Wisconsin Federation.

Governor La Follette is not, at present writing, a member of the Federation, seemingly favoring a looser type of Progressive party, as against a "class party" where the control is securely in the hands of farmers and workers. He is urging the development of a third party movement on a national scale, but not necessarily of a national Farmer-Labor party.

Detroit Labor in Politics

OUTSIDE of Minnesota and Wisconsin, various other trends in the Middle West looking toward a farmer-labor political alignment have been observed in recent years. A spectacular development in the 1937 municipal campaigns was that among the recently organized automobile workers in Detroit. In the state of Michigan, Socialist and Communist parties have for years been active among the workers, but have gained no major victories at the polls. A Farmer-Labor party was organized in 1934 but, soon after its organization, became involved in deals with old party candidates and, in the 1936 campaign, was split wide open over the support of the Union party candidate for President, Congressman William Lemke.

*At times, legislators absent themselves to evade voting on a mooted question.

At present the party has little organization or membership. Milton E. Scherer was for many years its moving spirit.

During the early part of 1937, the automobile workers were organized on an unprecedented scale in the United Automobile Workers of America. The U.A.W.A., at its 1936 convention, instructed the national office to give the strongest possible support to the formation of national, state and local farmer-labor parties. Detroit was the center of the organization campaign. This city contains perhaps a quarter of a million automobile workers who, with their families, constitute the majority of Detroit's 1,700,000 inhabitants. The Detroit District Council of the U.A.W.A., which represented the organized auto workers of the city, soon gave its attention to political action. Realizing that the automobile workers would, in one way or another, play a prominent role in the next municipal election, and angry at the anti-labor policy of the police commissioner and certain other officials in the city, the Council appointed on May 24, 1937, a committee of nine to consider how labor might most effectively work in this election. Alan Strachan, trade union organizer, was appointed the Campaign Director.

At its first meeting, the committee discussed the question of a labor candidate for the city, but reached no definite conclusion. About this time, Judge Patrick H. O'Brien, a liberal Democratic lawyer with a good labor record, was announced by Homer Martin, President of the U.A.W.A., as labor's candidate for Mayor, and was accepted as such by the committee of nine. The committee decided to nominate nine candidates for the City Council. It induced the Political Action Committee of the Wayne County Federation of Labor, the central body of the A. F. of L., to confer on the question of possible joint support of a labor ticket.

For a while it appeared that the two labor groups would agree on a ticket consisting of four representatives of the U. A. W., two members of the A. F. of L. and three others acceptable to both groups. The developing cleavage between the C. I. O. and the A. F. of L., however, had definite repercussions on the Detroit political situation. The A. F. of L. organizations finally refused to cooperate, and threw their support in the primaries to Councilman John Smith, former Mayor of Detroit. Smith was eliminated in the primaries, and the A.

F. of L. then urged the election of O'Brien's conservative opponent, Richard Reading. The Political Action Committee, representing the C.I.O., thereupon nominated five candidates for the Council, four of them presidents of automobile workers unions, and the remaining candidate, Maurice Sugar, well-known labor attorney.

The campaign slogan prominently employed by the Political Action Committee of the U.A.W.A., was "Vote Labor," although the official O'Brien Campaign Committee, in which Duncan McCrea, Democratic District Attorney, was a moving spirit, and the Women's Democratic Committee for O'Brien, which worked actively in the campaign, resorted to other slogans.

The labor platform demanded freedom to strike, to picket, and to bargain collectively; the removal of the "strike-breaking and dictatorial Commissioner of Police;" the public ownership and operation of public utilities; the abolition of private employment agencies; the unrestricted right of city employees to join labor unions of their own choosing; a city housing program adequate to the needs of the city, and other reforms.

The newspapers of Detroit denounced the labor slate as an attempt of the C.I.O. to "seize the reins of government" in the city. The campaign was complicated by the internal fight then waging within the auto workers' union. When the votes were counted, it was found that 261,048 had been cast for Reading for Mayor and 154,048 for the candidate on the labor slate, O'Brien—37 per cent of the total. The labor candidates for Council received from 126,000 to 145,000 votes. Sugar, the most popular of these, came within a few thousand votes of election.

The results of the campaign were hailed by the conservative press as a smashing defeat for labor. Many laborites felt otherwise. In view of the differences between the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O., and the internal strife then going on within the U.A.W.A.; in view of the lack of political experience of labor's political machine and the bitter and unfair attacks made on the labor slate by the press of the city, the results were regarded by many as a distinct labor victory. "A year ago," writes Ben Fischer, an active Socialist, "no one would have dared to predict that 150,000 workers would have marched to the polls under their own banner. . . . The election result was favorably re-

ceived by the workers. The reaction to the election was 'We'll show them next time.' There is a real resolve to build a labor party which is independent of the politicians."*

Following the election, the C.I.O. unions, affiliated with Labor's Non-Partisan League, urged the League "to issue a call for a state conference of all labor unions as soon as possible to consider the formation of a state labor party to be based on the same fundamental principles as the labor unions." They likewise resolved that, "inasmuch as labor in many other states is moving in a determined way toward the formation of state labor parties and is seeking through these ultimately to form a labor party nationally, that the temporary executive board immediately investigate the New Jersey Labor party, the American Labor party of New York, and the Tri-State Labor party conference conducted recently by Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois labor parties." The conference was called and a continuing committee appointed. In the spring of 1938, plans were made by the Labor's Non-Partisan League of Michigan to organize branches in every political subdivision of the state. Branch membership was opened to farm and progressive organizations. Homer Martin, President of the U.A.-W.U., was elected state chairman of the League, while an executive committee of 35 was placed in charge of organization work. In view of the situation in the United Automobile Workers, and the campaign of Governor Murphy for reelection, many members of C.I.O. unions are urging that no separate state-wide labor ticket be nominated in 1938. This view is being vigorously challenged by other workers' groups.

The Illinois Labor Party

IN ILLINOIS, another Middle Western state, where the two old parties have for decades been notorious for their corruption and reaction, the beginnings of a labor party are likewise seen. In July, 1936, trade union delegates from a considerable number of unions came together and organized the Illinois Labor party as the political arm of labor. The previous year a Labor party had been organized by trade unionists in Chicago and Cook County. The party took no active part in the 1936 campaign.

Socialist Review, Jan.-Feb., 1938 Seidman, Joel, "Detroit's Labor Slate," *The Nation*, Sept. 11, 1937; Winn, Frank, "Labor Slate in Detroit," *The New Republic*, Nov. 3, 1937.

In its 1937 conference, the party, with its affiliation of about 80 trade unions, prominent in which is the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, opened its ranks to such fraternal bodies of labor as the Workmen's Circle. It, however, made no provision for the admission of working class political parties, although an election agreement with the Socialist party, the only working class political party on the ballot in Illinois in the 1936 elections, was taken for granted.

The delegates at the conference discussed the possibility of nominating a state-wide ticket for 1938 and of nominating several legislative candidates. On the question of independent action, the convention made the following compromise recommendation: "The Illinois Labor party shall not participate in the primaries of capitalist parties where, in the opinion of the executive committee, such participation interferes with the election of Labor party candidates. The party will take any action necessary to elect its own candidates or those sponsored by other recognized labor forces on an independent labor ticket, in order to win independent labor campaigns." The recommendation thus permits the party to cooperate in the election of independent labor candidates and likewise to leave the field free to candidates of Labor's Non-Partisan League nominated in an old party primary. All local campaigns will not be surrendered by the party, however, to Labor's Non-Partisan League. The Communist party delegates, at the 1937 convention, urged the virtual liquidation of the Labor party and its absorption into Labor's Non-Partisan League. The Communist group is now working in the League, though not in the Labor party. Socialists are active in the party.

Ohio and Iowa

IN THE State of Ohio, for many years past, an Ohio Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation, a part of the Farmer-Labor Political Federation, which is described in the following pages, has been in existence under the chairmanship of Herbert A. Hard of Columbus, formerly of the North Dakota Non-Partisan League. This group, however, has run few candidates. A rival group, calling itself a Farmer-Labor party, started in Akron in 1936 by Communists, ran several candidates, but secured only a small vote. The Socialist party of the state continues its activity.

In Akron and Canton in 1937 members of the C. I. O. ran candidates in the Democratic primaries and organized vigorous campaigns in behalf of those winning the nomination. Labor was defeated, however, in the general elections. During the campaigns, unfortunately, some of the candidates endorsed demonstrated that they were far from ideal labor candidates. One proved to be an actually anti-labor man.

In Iowa, a group of farmers and industrial workers organized a Farmer-Labor party a few years ago at the initiation of the Farmer-Labor Political Federation, and, in 1934 and 1936, ran candidates for all state offices. It claims organizations in the majority of the counties of the state. Wallace Short ran twice as candidate for Governor and is the party's 1938 designee. Gus Erickson, coal miner, chairman of the party, and Minnie Duvall of Des Moines, secretary, are among its moving spirits. "The farmers of Iowa," writes Secretary Duvall, "have taken the lead in building our party. We have added labor in greater numbers in the last two years. The Workers' Alliance and the C. I. O. sent delegates to our last conference. We have some lawyers, small business men and teachers who number among our best members. Our organized group is built up from the rank and file of voters rather than by organizations." The party is still a distinctly minority movement with few electoral victories to its credit.

The 1936 platform of the Iowa Farmer-Labor party reaffirmed the party's stand "against the present obsolete system of competition, aggrandizement of property and aggregators of wealth in favor of and in behalf of a system based upon cooperation and service, which is a cooperative commonwealth."

Other Mid-Western States

IN THE West and South West—exclusive of the Pacific Coast—beginnings of Farmer-Labor parties are also in evidence in Indiana, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Montana, Arkansas and Oklahoma. North Dakota is the birthplace of the Non-Partisan League, which for many years controlled the government of that state through its capture of the Republican party; extended the functions of the state government over banking, marketing and other

services and greatly influenced political alignments in Minnesota and other states. Today, however, the League is engaged in a bitter factional fight that has divided and weakened its forces.

In South Dakota, the South Dakota Progressive Federation was organized in November, 1937, with an executive committee containing representatives of the Farmers' Union, the Workers Alliance, the Railroad Brotherhoods and various other labor, civic and political groups. In the immediate future, the Federation plans to work through the primaries of the old parties. Later on many of its members hope that it will aid in the development of a new party.

The American Labor Party of New York

WHILE the Middle West has furnished the best examples in recent years of powerful Farmer-Labor political alignments, independent movements of labor on the political field are now developing in the extreme East and West. The most significant development in the East is the rise of the American Labor party of New York State.

The American Labor party was organized during the Presidential campaign of 1936. Many of the trade union leaders responsible for the launching of the movement were members of Labor's Non-Partisan League. They were also leaders in the International Ladies Garment Workers, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the Millinery Workers, the Social Democratic Federation and other interested groups which had gone on record time and time again in favor of the organization of a Labor party. The launching of an American Labor party in 1936 was favored for two reasons: first and primarily, to aid in the reelection of President Roosevelt; secondly, to secure from the very beginning, as a result of their connection with the Roosevelt campaign, recognition as a major political factor in the state.

During this campaign, members of the party were asked to pledge support to the candidacy of Roosevelt for President and Herbert H. Lehman for Governor of New York. A party in New York acquires legal status by securing 50,000 or more votes for its candidates for Governor. Some 263,000 votes were cast for Governor Lehman under the A.L.P. emblem.

During 1937, the A.L.P. developed its organization in New York City and throughout the state. A year after its organization it claimed an affiliation of 250 trade unions, with a membership of 250,000 and 65,000 individual members.

In the municipal elections of 1937, the A.L.P. was the first party to nominate Fiorello H. LaGuardia for Mayor. It endorsed a Fusion slate of anti-Tammany candidates on the city-wide ticket. It made independent nominations for Councilmen, for President of the Borough of the Bronx, for most of the Assembly and for some judicial, Congressional and other candidates.

The party conducted an independent campaign, financed almost entirely by trade union contributions and by dues of its membership, and adopted a labor platform. The platform declared, among other things, that, "where private enterprise and capital have failed to meet public necessities adequately, the people must rely on their cooperative power, exercised through government agencies, to supply the deficiency and to provide the measures necessary to secure the public welfare." Such reliance, declared the platform, must increasingly be on public agencies in the fields of housing, power, transit, milk and civil service.

In housing the A.L.P. pledged itself to work for lower land costs, for state credit to housing, and for a more uniform participation of the city and federal government in large scale housing projects. In the field of electrical energy it urged public ownership, "which alone offers to the public fair service at fair rates." As a start in that direction, it favored "a city-owned power plant to be used as a yardstick in determining what constitutes a fair price."

The platform likewise called for public ownership and operation of transit, the construction of city milk distributing plants as yardsticks, and the extension and strengthening of the civil service. It set forth a program for the extension of the health, recreational, educational and other services; urged proportional representation; denounced the use of force by government to resolve economic disputes; advocated the steady improvement and extension of machinery for the peaceful adjustment of disputes, and supported the efforts of labor to eliminate child exploitation, sub-standard wages, excessive hours, and sweat-shop working conditions.

The official bulletin of the party during this campaign, in outlining the party's future policy toward old party candidates, declared that the A.L.P. had, in the past, endorsed candidates of the two major parties. It stated that the party might also from time to time make an exception in the future and endorse the candidates of another party, but that its "main purpose is to support and elect our own candidates on our own platform."

In the ensuing November elections, a total of 482,459 citizens voted for La Guardia in the A.L.P. column, (24 per cent of the total vote for Mayor) as contrasted with 672,823 in the Republican column and 159,859 in the Fusion column. Five A.L.P. candidates for Council were elected out of a total Council of 26. Another A.L.P. member won an election on the Fusion ticket. B. Charney Vladeck, leader of the A.L.P. delegation, was subsequently chosen the leader of the anti-Tammany bloc. A bloc of 5 A.L.P. candidates was sent to the Assembly, four of these with no old party endorsement. All of the A.L.P. Assemblymen came from Greater New York. In the state-at-large, the party ran few independent candidates.

The A.L.P. in the state is governed by an executive committee selected partly by the local branches and partly by the trade unions on a practically 50-50 basis. Alexander Rose, for many years secretary of the Millinery Workers, was selected secretary of the party in 1937. Voters may join as members-at-large, on the payment of 50 cents a year, or as members of Assembly district organizations, membership in which gives full voting privileges. The 1936 rules provided that a member of the A.L.P. must not be a member of another functioning party.

The Socialist party in New York during the 1936 campaign vigorously criticised the American Labor party for its endorsement of the Democratic candidates for President and Governor, and its failure to put into the field any independent Labor party candidates. In the municipal campaign of 1937, the Socialist party supported many of the A.L.P. candidates who were running independently of the two major parties. It likewise withdrew its candidate, Norman Thomas, from the Mayoralty race, in the belief that such action would strengthen the labor movement and the party's "usefulness in building a national labor party." Socialists did not, however, endorse Mayor La Guardia,

who was running on the Republican, as well as on the A.L.P. ticket. Following the campaign, conversations were started by the state committee of the Socialist party with A.L.P. looking toward closer co-operation with the Labor party.

The Communist party in 1937 gave its endorsement to most of the candidates nominated or endorsed by the A.L.P. It nominated several candidates of its own for Council. The first two years of the A.L.P.'s existence gave rise to considerable discussion regarding the distribution of power over party policies between the trade unions and members of the ward clubs; the place of educational and propaganda groups of an open and secret nature within the party and the qualifications of candidates on party offices.

The New Jersey Labor Party

WHILE the A.L.P. was in the process of organization, labor in New Jersey—particularly the C.I.O.—was receiving the active opposition of the Democratic and Republican machines in its efforts to organize.

Shortly after the November elections of 1937, the New Jersey branch of Labor's Non-Partisan League, stimulated by the electoral successes of labor's political venture in New York, called a convention to consider the future political policy of labor. A special impetus was given to independent political action by the dictatorial policy of Mayor Frank Hague of Jersey City, leader of the Democratic party of the state and a vice-chairman of the National Democratic party. For over a year, the police force of the city, under Mayor Hague, had prevented C.I.O. organizers from holding union meetings, had arrested peaceful pickets, had run union leaders out of town and had brutally beaten and jailed many engaged in lawful organization activities.

The convention was called for December 15, 1937, at Newark, New Jersey. C.I.O. unions, for the most part, favored the conference. The State Federation of Labor, unfortunately, on hearing of the proposed meeting, requested all of its affiliates to boycott it. However, when the delegates gathered in Newark, they found that 34 A. F. of L. locals were represented. Of the 164 organizations that had sent delegates, 112 were C.I.O. affiliates. About 750 persons attended the convention, representative of 150,000 workers. Senator Lundeen of Minnesota,

Luigi Antonini of the New York A.L.P. and E. L. Oliver of Labor's Non-Partisan League, addressed the gathering. The delegates unanimously voted to form an American Labor party of New Jersey and elected an executive committee of 42 members to work out details of organization and to call another convention within 6 months.

The resolution creating the party contained a preamble vigorously denunciatory of both Democratic and Republican machines.

"For the past 150 years," read the declaration in part, "the people of New Jersey have been ruthlessly exploited by corrupt political machines financed by Tory interests and maintained for their benefit. The economic and political enslavement of the people of New Jersey has reached an unbearable stage with the advent to power of Mayor Frank Hague of Jersey City and Governor Harold G. Hoffman of New Jersey."

"The people of New Jersey have been fleeced of their civil liberties and constitutional rights by Mayor Hague, Governor Hoffman and their well-paid hirelings and reactionary allies. [They] have been forced for many years to bear the full burden of keeping idling ward-healers in needless political jobs.

"The organized workers have been denied, by a reign of terror, by a flood of sweeping injunctions and by the force of state troopers, from organizing and bettering their living and working standards. The people of New Jersey can no longer have faith in the empty pre-election promises of the Hague-and-Hoffman dominated Democratic and Republican parties that have betrayed them.

"The time is here when the people are ready to throw off the chains of bondage and become free American citizens fighting for progress and against reaction."

During the early months of 1938, committees were active in preparing for the second Labor party gathering.

Pennsylvania

IN THE neighboring industrial State of Pennsylvania, many efforts have been made since the turn of the century to develop an independent party of the masses. The chief success in labor political action thus far attained has been in Reading, Pennsylvania, where

the Socialists twice elected a Mayor prior to 1938 and several times sent Socialist candidates to the Assembly. For many years, James H. Maurer, President of the Pennsylvania Federation of Labor, and candidate for Vice-President, was the party's representative of the Pennsylvania legislature.* Abraham Epstein, moving spirit of the American Association for Social Security, secured his first start in the field of social insurance as Secretary of the Pennsylvania Old Age Pension Commission of which Mr. Maurer was the chairman.

During the twenties and early thirties, numerous attempts were made to develop labor parties, but were not particularly successful. In 1937, labor scored a number of local victories in Pittsburgh and surrounding cities, where 40 C.I.O. candidates running for the most part on the Democratic party ticket were elected to office. In some cities, where the C.I.O. chose the Democratic candidate as the lesser of two evils, the situation became somewhat anomalous. In New Kensington labor was faced with a Republican who was a mill superintendent and a Democrat who was a substantial stockholder and "anti-labor." Labor chose the Democrat. "The result is that New Kensington, a solidly organized town, has an anti-labor Mayor and police chief during this critical period."

In early 1938, John L. Lewis, head of the Miners and the C.I.O., brought pressure to bear on the Democratic party to nominate Thomas Kennedy, Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of the United Mine Workers, as candidate for Governor. During the negotiations with the Democratic machine, President William Green of the A. F. of L. declared that the charter of the Pennsylvania Federation of Labor was being revoked. This declaration, he declared, was made as a means of serving notice that "the 400,000 loyal members of the A. F. of L. unions in Pennsylvania" could not be delivered by leaders "not affiliated with A. F. of L."

The Democratic machine refused to designate Kennedy as its nominee, and Labor's Non-Partisan League placed his name in the Democratic primaries. If Kennedy is not nominated, many members of Labor's Non-Partisan League threaten to nominate him on a labor ticket. A powerful Labor party in Pennsylvania can be created as

*The Reading Socialist administration group left the Socialist party of the United States following the 1936 campaign.

soon as it is actively supported by the United Mine Workers, the organized steel workers, the hosiery workers and needle trades represented in the C.I.O. At present, unfortunately, practically all of the executive board of Labor's Non-Partisan League in the state are appointees of the state's Democratic administration.

Connecticut

THE situation in Connecticut at present writing is, as in Pennsylvania, in a position of flux. Labor parties of various types have been organized at various times in that state. During the summers of 1935 and 1936, efforts were made to launch a Connecticut Labor party following conferences in Hartford and New Haven, respectively.† The parties, though functioning in several sections of the state, did not, however, secure the support of powerful sections of the labor movement.

In early 1938, the Socialist party, U.S.A., under the leadership of Devere Allen, decided to designate the Connecticut section of the party the Connecticut "Labor Party" and proceeded to secure 7,000 signatures required in that state for a change of name.

In the meanwhile the Socialist party of Bridgeport, which broke away from the Socialist party of the United States, continued to hold power in that industrial city and to give an honest and capable administration, though one marked by few distinctly labor or socialistic features. In the 1937 municipal elections, the Mayor, Jasper McLevy, was reelected by a vote of 28,538, 68.8 per cent of the total. Socialists were likewise elected to all other city offices by a similar vote.

California

ACROSS the Continent, on the Pacific Coast, several developments are taking place which may give rise to Farmer-Labor parties within the next few years. In California, the followers of Upton Sinclair in 1934 formed the End Poverty League, with the slogan, "End Poverty in California." Through this League, the Epic movement, as it has been referred to, captured the administrative machinery of the Democratic party in the state, nominated Upton

†See *The Nation*, V. 141, No. 3656; *New Leader*, July 25, 1936.

Sinclair for Governor, helped to pile up for their candidate a vote of 897,000 (many were probably uncounted) as compared with 1,138,000 for his successful Republican opponent, and elected 22 representatives to the state assembly.

Following this election, the state committee of the Democratic party gradually slipped away from Epic control. In 1936, but 10 Epic members were named on a Democratic slate of 48 delegates to the party's national convention. Most of these resigned from the slate, ran on an independent Epic slate and were defeated as delegates. In the ensuing convention, the Democratic party refused the demand of the Epic League to put a "production for use" plank in its platform.

Following this refusal, many Epics left the party. Others remained in, and continued their attempt to "capture the party machinery." Some epics joined the Progressive party, originally organized in 1912 by Hiram Johnson as a middle class liberal party and kept in the field with the exception of a few years since then. In 1934 Raymond L. Haight had secured 300,000 liberal and conservative votes on the Progressive ticket as candidate for Governor.

In June, 1936, about 100 Californians, including Sinclair and Allen Sessions, former political chairman of the Epics in Sinclair's campaign, incorporated the Progressive Commonwealth Federation "to take over the established Progressive party of California", to dedicate this party to the general objective of "plenty for all through production for use"; to see that Progressive party nominees were committed to this program and "to join with other such state movements in a unified national party in 1940 and 1944 committed to the same program."

The Federation, which, in early 1938, had about 1200 dues-paying members and 5000 associate members, advocates, among other things, the public ownership of natural resources, utilities and finance. In general it supports only candidates of the Progressive party, but may support "in rare cases liberal candidates of other parties." Its candidate in the 1938 election for Governor is Mr. Haight. To what extent it will attract mass farmer-labor support is still problematical.

In the meanwhile the Socialist party is still functioning in the state and urging the building of a bona fide farmer-labor party. The Com-

munist party is working in cooperation with Labor's Non-Partisan League which is throwing its efforts into the Democratic party.

In 1935 the Communists and others organized in San Francisco a local labor party under the name United Labor party, a title which unfortunately recalled to residents of that metropolis an unsavory political set-up promoted for years by members of the building trades for bargaining purposes with old party politicians. The U.L.P. ticket received but 14,000 votes. A mass party of labor and farmers in California has not as yet been born.

Oregon

NORTH of California in Oregon, several independents secured the support of certain progressive groups in the early thirties. Among these was State Senator Pete Zimmerman, candidate for Governor in 1934, who, as an independent Progressive, polled around 100,000 votes. In 1935, a Farmer-Labor party was organized under Federation of Labor leadership, but this party, after a short time, split over the Townsend issue. More recently the Oregon Commonwealth Federation has been formed. In the spring of 1937, the Federation issued the following call:

"To lay the foundation for progressive political action we issue this call to organizations in city and country, to farm organizations and trade unions, to producers and consumers' cooperatives, to youth and student and unemployed organizations, to religious and cultural societies, to pension and political clubs. Select your delegates to convene in Portland, April 24 and 25, 1937, to lay the foundation for an organization for progressive political action in Oregon."

Over 400 delegates were present at this first convention. The delegates present adopted a platform which followed other Commonwealth Federation platforms in urging "the public ownership of all natural resources, utilities, banks and monopolies." They declared it their purpose "to unite the progressive forces of our state, irrespective of race, religion or political affiliation," and proposed "to advance by every democratic means measures of the public welfare, and to elect to office those persons committed to the creation of a democratic society of peace, security and abundance."

The convention selected Professor H. Stevenson Smith of the University of Oregon as the first president and Monroe Sweetland, Socialist, and former field organizer of the League for Industrial Democracy, as executive secretary, and provided for a Board of Directors to be elected from the affiliated organizations.

The Federation has not as yet committed itself to the formation of a third party, but merely to the ousting of the "reactionary" Democratic Governor of Oregon, Governor Charles H. Martin, "a notorious labor hater—most reactionary of all the 48 Governors!"

The Federation likewise opposes various judicial, city and county officials who "use their official power to aid the interest of wealth, deny civil rights and oppress the dispossessed." Many of the members of the Federation can undoubtedly be depended upon to place the Federation back of a national Farmer-Labor party, when such a party is formed. The reactionary character of both the Democratic and the Republican machines in Oregon favors the development in the not distant future of an independent party of labor, although the splits in the labor movement here as elsewhere greatly retard labor party progress.

Washington

IN THE State of Washington, the Commonwealth Federation was started as an outgrowth of the Technocracy movement, with its radical, middle-class following. The Federation was at first committed to a "production for use" program, and many of its followers felt that the organization would, at an early date, launch a third party. In 1937, however, it eliminated the production for use plank from its platform, on the ground that this plank lost the Federation vital labor support. It still urged, however, the public ownership of monopolies, banks, public utilities and natural resources. Recently, likewise, it has definitely rejected third party action. At present it is a non-partisan political movement—a federation of organizations—a "People's Front," attempting to unite labor and middle-class progressives to secure the election of pro-labor public officials, chiefly in the Democratic party, and to check upon those officials when elected to office. In the March, 1938 municipal elections, its candidate for Mayor of Seattle, Lieutenant Governor Victor A. Meyers,

was defeated by a large margin. The defeat was due in considerable part to the split in the labor movement. Meyers was here supported by the C.I.O. unions, but opposed by many in the A. F. of L. The vaudeville character of many of Meyer's political efforts undoubtedly alienated many voters. Whether the Commonwealth Federation will break away in the next few years from the Democratic party it is impossible to say.

In many other states, much agitation is being carried on in behalf of a new alignment.

Toward a National Party

HOW SOON these local and state movements will coalesce into a national Farmer-Labor party, gathering with them strong national labor and farm organizations, is still a moot question. As I have stated elsewhere, many of the state movements, including those in Minnesota and Wisconsin, have pledged themselves to work for a national Farmer-Labor party and are actively engaged in that task. Various national groups are also committed to the formation of a Farmer-Labor political alignment.

A development among national farmer and labor groups that might lay the basis for joint political action in the future was a series of conferences begun in late 1937 between representatives of Labor's Non-Partisan League and the Farmers Educational and Co-operative Union of America. At the December 12, 1937 conference, representatives of these organizations signed a "Memorandum of Understanding," the preamble of which maintained that labor and the farmer were equally exploited and should get together for the purpose of advancing their mutual interests.

To promote an understanding of these interests, the representatives urged the use of labor and farmer educational and publicity facilities and the conduct of united legislative campaigns. They declared that the artificial antagonisms between the two groups fostered by those "who have been impartially exploiting both farmer and laborer . . . can be removed only through a business structure founded and operated on a basis of cooperative ownership and democratic principles. We therefore recommend that every effort be exerted by both groups

in educating in the principles of industrial democracy and extending democratic control of the business system through which we may ultimately exchange the products of industry and the products of agriculture without the penalty of profit tolls being levied by those who at present commonly exploit us."

The representatives recommended the holding of further conferences. These recommendations were subsequently accepted by the farmer and labor groups participating.

On February 11, 1938, another conference of Labor's Non-Partisan League and of the Farmers' Education and Cooperative Union was held in Chicago. This conference drafted a farmer-labor declaration of principles and a legislative program. It urged organization of both groups as producers and consumers. It declared that these groups must also "organize their political strength—so that state and national governments may be used in democratizing industry."

As first steps in a fundamental program, the conference urged a more extensive federal relief program, the complete federal ownership of the Federal Reserve system, the liberalization of credit, land, housing, social security, farm marketing, and labor laws, and the public ownership of the railroads.

When this legislative program, however, was brought before the February 16 meeting of the Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union, the Board of Directors refused to ratify it on the ground that the Union's convention had given it no power so to do, and that "the general membership of neither labor nor farm organizations are yet sufficiently conversant with the others' problems to enter into agreements aimed at specific legislative action. Precipitate action at this time might result in greater antagonism and dissension than now exists."

However, the Board of Directors declared that it would "be happy to cooperate in holding future joint conferences for the purpose of promoting better understanding between organized labor and organized agriculture." The effect of such conversations on independent political action is as yet uncertain.

In the trade union field, all of the powerful international unions in the needle trades, the United Automobile Workers Union and several other nation-wide unions have at various times urged the building of

a national Labor or Farmer-Labor party. The sentiment of many of the organizations within the C.I.O. was expressed by David Dubinsky, president of the I.L.G.W.U., in his address before the Auto Workers Union, in 1937. "Do not rely," warned President Dubinsky, "on the old political parties. Let us form our own party. . . . There is great need for independent political action." *

During the Presidential campaign of 1936, the C. I. O., with some A. F. of L. backing, organized Labor's Non-Partisan League, to mobilize labor's support in behalf of President Roosevelt. During the campaign, the League was headed by Major George J. Berry, president of the Printing Pressmen's Union, an A. F. of L. union. Following the election, the League was reorganized, with John L. Lewis as chairman and E. L. Oliver, executive secretary, and placed under C. I. O. control, although many A. F. of L. representatives were retained on the L.N.P.L. committees. Of late, the League has aided in the election of labor candidates and "friends of labor" in state and city elections, usually supporting efforts of labor to capture the primaries of the old parties, at times, as in New Jersey, stimulating the development of a labor party. It has likewise supported labor legislation in state and federal legislatures. It is organizing state and local branches in many sections of the country.

At present writing some of the officers of the League are actively discouraging agitation for the launching within the near future of a national Farmer-Labor party on the ground that the time is not ripe for it. Many of the state leagues have been under attack for the character of these endorsements. The League urges local groups to state their campaign issues "in broad terms of progressive and efficient government. . . . Labor only plays into the hands of its opponents when it lends support to the fiction that 'labor' is a special and separate elements in the population. . . . Labor is 'the general public.' It is only the reactionaries who seek to set 'labor' up against the whole community, as a 'special interest.'" What the League's future role will be in the building of a national farmer-labor party it is difficult to predict. Its support in a third party venture is, however, highly important.

**Socialist Call*, July 4, 1937.

Most of the A. F. of L. unions still favor the traditional policy of "rewarding friends and punishing enemies" within the ranks of the two old parties. One of the most vigorous debates on the subject of independent political action in recent years took place in the 1935 convention of the A. F. of L. In that convention, more than a dozen resolutions were introduced in support of a labor party, many from unions now included within the C.I.O. group.

Supporters of these resolutions insisted that a program for balancing the forces of production and consumption through the employment of the jobless and through a just distribution of wealth was the prime need of the people of the country. No such program was being advanced, they declared, in either of the old parties. No matter how willing President Roosevelt might be to carry out a program of fundamental change, they continued, his dependence on the support of the Democratic party, controlled to a considerable extent by reactionary industrial forces of the South and corrupt political machines of the North, made the achievement of such a program impossible.

President Green of the Federation in his keynote address before the convention prior to the labor party discussion, took the position that labor could not be coerced into the espousal of a labor party by outside groups, but that the Federation would declare itself "in favor of independent political action, in the formation of an independent labor party, when the crystallized opinion of the workers indicates that they believe that their interests can better be served through such action rather than through the pursuit of a non-partisan political policy."*

The convention delegates, in the belief that America was not ready for a labor party, cast a 6 to 1 vote against the pro-labor party resolutions. On April 2, 1938, President Green strongly advised A. F. of L. members and organizations to withdraw all support from Labor's Non-Partisan League and to set up A. F. of L. Non-Partisan Committees.

Among minority parties, the Socialist party has long looked forward to the day when the farmers and workers of America would form a powerful party of their own dedicated to fundamental economic change. During the early twenties, the Socialists played a prominent role in the League for Progressive Political Action, organized by the

* New York Times, April 12, 1936.

Machinists, the Railroad Brotherhoods and others. In the ensuing LaFollette campaign of 1924, the Socialist party supported Senator LaFollette in the hope that the Progressive party of 1924 was laying the foundation for a genuine party of labor. When a farmer-labor political party is organized on a national scale, the Socialists are desirous of becoming a participant in its councils. The Socialist party would urge that such a mass party become completely independent of the two old parties and, as rapidly as possible, that it commit itself to a program for a new social order under which the essential industries of the country are socially owned and democratically managed for the common good.

"In America," writes Norman Thomas, thrice candidate for President on the Socialist party ticket, "the next logical step for Socialists who rejoice in the progress labor unions are making under the C.I.O. would seem to be the formation on a national scale of a labor, or, better, a farmer-labor party. We should not expect that party immediately to be fully Socialist. It could not take the place of Socialist organization for purposes of education and agitation. But Socialists should be delighted to work with it in election campaigns. It is clear that the workers are more likely to resort to such a party than to flock in great masses to the Socialist party." *

The Communist party for a number of years during the twenties urged the formation of a Farmer-Labor party. In 1932, in the so-called "third period" of the Communist movement, the party leaders urged the building up of the Communist party as the revolutionary organ of the masses independent of any other party. "The Republican party," William Z. Foster, Communist Presidential candidate declared at that time, "is the party of finance capital, of the great bankers and industrialists of Wall Street. . . . The Democratic party is no less the party of the big capitalists. . . . Wherever the Democratic party is found in power its practical policies are identical with those of the Republicans and they sum up into a defense of the interests of the capitalists at the expense of the producing masses."

The Communists likewise criticized Progressive leaders, declaring that they fitted themselves "comfortably into the infamous two party

**The Social Frontier*, Jan. 1938.

system. This constitutes a betrayal of the masses into the hands of their capitalist enemies." As for social democracy, its policy "is basically that of fascism," while "in the A. F. of L. the process of fascization is far advanced. . . . Their endorsement of election candidates of the capitalist parties, or 'reward-your friends' policy is a plain sell-out of the working class." The only alternative left to the workers is the support of the Communist party. "In all of its parliamentary activities," continued Mr. Foster, "the Communist party makes it clear to the workers that capitalist democracy is a sham."[‡]

Following the meeting of the Communist International in the summer of 1935, however, the Communist party in the United States urged the development here, as elsewhere, of the "people's front" against fascism, and of a farmer-labor party as one of the manifestations of this "people's front." In the spring of 1936, it called upon various groups to form a national farmer-labor party.

Following the Presidential campaign, it urged workers in some states to support a movement toward a farmer-labor party, and in others to work for the time being through the old parties and to build up Labor's Non-Partisan League "in all communities on a wide democratic basis as a mass weapon of united labor on the political field."

"Labor is vitally interested in the Democratic party as one of the vehicles at the present time for the people's progress to the solution of their pressing social problems," declared the Central Committee of the Communist party, U.S.A., in September, 1937.[¶] "Labor is vitally interested in strengthening the progressive and people's front forces everywhere, especially in the party which today holds the power of government. In this way labor moves at the present time to the next stage in the struggle for the people's front and to the eventual crystallization in the national Farmer-Labor party. This is a correct class policy for labor and the best policy for the people. . . . At this time the development of the people's front can only proceed along such lines as will combine the Farmer-Labor party form of the people's front with the simultaneous development of progressive movements within the Democratic party (in some localities also within the Republican party.) . . . Labor will build more intensively its

[‡]William Z. Foster, *Toward Soviet America*, p. 177, 178, 285, 288, 255.

[¶]*Daily Worker*, September 4, 1937.

independent political strength and program and will consolidate its alliance with the sincere spokesmen of bourgeois democracy and with all genuine progressive forces."

Pursuant of this policy, Communists and Communist sympathizers have of late been active in some states in labor and farmer-labor parties, as in New York and Minnesota, while in California, Washington, Oregon, Illinois, Pennsylvania and other states they have supported Labor's Non-Partisan League in their aim to secure the nomination of pro-labor men in Democratic primaries, and have opposed attempts of other forces of labor to launch a labor party.

Outside of these political and economic groups, there have been a number of national organizations formed to stimulate Farmer-Labor party development. Conspicuous among these was the League for Independent Political Action, now combined with the American Commonwealth Federation.

The L.I.P.A. was formed shortly after the campaign of 1928 for the purpose of stimulating the organization of a farmer-labor party on a national scale. After several years of educational and agitational work, with Howard Y. Williams as its executive secretary, the League called a general conference in early September, 1933, which voted to organize a Farmer-Labor Political Federation inside of the L.I.P.A. †

In 1935, the F.L.P.F. sponsored another conference in Chicago on July 5th and 6th. The name of organization was changed at this conference to the American Commonwealth Federation, although the name Farmer-Labor Political Federation was retained by the "Mid-Western Division" of the A.C.F. The Conference adopted a program of "production for use." Alfred M. Bingham, editor of *Common Sense*, was elected secretary and Congressman Amlie, chairman of the reorganized society. This Federation has helped to organize state federations for local work. Mr. Bingham, the secretary, however has recently stirred up a vigorous controversy within the ranks of the A.C.F. by his advice for labor and progressives to cooperate with the New Deal.*

In addition to these forces there is the Social Democratic Federation, composed largely of former members of the Socialist party, which is working for a national party of labor.

†See Laidler, *A Program for Modern America*, p. 464.

**Common Sense*, Oct., 1937.

There are also numerous progressive Congressmen and Senators who will gladly abandon the old parties and join a farmer-labor party when the latter obtains sufficient strength. However, most of these, before joining, want an assurance that such affiliation will not prevent their re-election to Congress. They are engaging in the game of a watchful waiting.

In Conclusion

IT IS thus seen from the foregoing that a very great dissatisfaction exists in the ranks of labor and of farming groups with the present political set-up; that, in several states, independent farmer-labor and labor parties have already been launched with varying degrees of success and that, in others, vigorous educational and political movements are at work in behalf of a labor and farmer-labor political movement. At the present moment, the divisions in the ranks of labor and the belief that labor should support the Rooseveltian New Deal against big business attacks have somewhat retarded developments on a national scale.

There are, however, potent forces at work, on the other side, which are giving a powerful impulse to a party of the masses. Included in these forces are:

1. The great increase in labor organization among the unskilled. This development is furnishing a much sounder basis for the development of labor than it possessed in past years.

2. The recent advance in the consumers' cooperative movement, particularly among the farmers, and the need of a government which will encourage, and not retard, the strengthening of this vital movement.

3. The growing importance of social and agricultural legislation in general as a means of safeguarding the interests of the masses, legislation which is bound to be bitterly opposed by the propertied interests that largely control the old political machines, and the enactment of which requires a new political set-up.

4. The ever greater realization that neither the Old Deal nor the New Deal is able to cure the evils of unemployment and poverty, and

that only a fundamental change in property relations will bring security, economic justice and high living standard to the working masses.

5. The increasing threat of war under the administration of President Roosevelt, and with war the imminent danger of some form of fascist control.

6. The almost inevitable demand of the masses, with their present educational facilities and their expanding organizations, for the acquisition by city workers and farmers of political and economic power commensurate with their importance in the life of the nation. In making this demand, these economic groups believe that they are merely urging the carrying out of the principles of genuine democracy.

The forces leading to a new political alignment of useful workers of hands and brain are far more powerful than are those in opposition thereto and are bound, despite possible temporary set-backs, to lead in America, as in many other lands—and in the not distant future—to a powerful political party dedicated to the security, the comfort and the freedom of the common man.

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- See files of *Common Sense*, particularly in the department called "Political Paragraphs; see publications of Farmer-Labor Political Federation, Hotel Frederick, St. Paul, Minnesota; Socialist party, including *Socialist Call*, 549 W. Randolph St., Chicago, Ill.; Labor's Non-Partisan League, Willard Hotel, Washington D. C.; Minnesota Farmer-Labor Association, including *Minnesota Leader*, Labor Temple, St. Paul; Wisconsin Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation, 1012 Third Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Illinois Labor party, 180 W. Washington Street, Chicago, Ill.; Commonwealth Political Federation, 315 Fourth Avenue, New York City; American Labor Party, 151 West 40th Street, New York City; Social Democratic Federation, 814 Albee Building, Washington, D.C. and *New Leader*, 7 East 15th St., New York City; Communist Party, 31 East 12th Street, New York City.

BOOK NOTES

THE FOLKLORE OF CAPITALISM, by Thurman W. Arnold. *New Haven: Yale University Press.* 1937. 400 pp. \$3.00.

Especial interest attaches to this trenchant criticism of many of the underlying assumptions of capitalist economics because of the author's recent appointment as head of the "trust busters" in the legal staff of the federal government. In this book, Professor Arnold, former Professor of Law at Yale Law School, finds the dogmas of America "particularly those of its learned men," resembling "closely the views of the University of Paris in the Middle Ages, which formally found that quinine could not cure fever, since its use controverted the principles of men of decency and erudition who all knew that fever was caused by humors of the blood." In this delightfully written and searching volume, Professor Arnold sets forth the virtues, absurdities and inconsistencies, as he sees them, of our modern capitalism. In a special chapter on "The Effect of the Anti-Trust Laws," he contends that the laws up till the present have served as "the greatest protection to uncontrolled business dictatorships. . . . Being a preaching device, [they] naturally performed only the functions of preaching." Whether they will become more than an innocuous preaching device under the supervision of Dr. Arnold, it is too early to tell. Even the highly paid lawyers for our biggest and best trusts can hardly tell from the context just what the author will do in his present position to the "malefactors of great wealth."

L.

SOCIAL SECURITY, by Maxwell S. Stewart. *N. Y. Norton.* 1938. 320 pp. \$3.00.

In clear, simple, vivid English, Maxwell Stewart has given us a comprehensive picture of the present status of social insurance legislation in the United States. The book is illustrated by telling pictorial statistics by Rudolph Modley.

Mr. Maxwell's volume is divided into three sections. The first deals with the widespread character of economic insecurity in a machine age; the second, with the steps that have already been taken toward social security in this country and the third, with the new horizons ahead, particularly in the field of health insurance.

One of the most striking parts of this book is the critical chapter on the Social Security Act. Mr. Stewart clearly indicates the utter inadequacy of this act in the fields of unemployment insurance and old age pensions. Unemployment insurance, he believes, should be organized on a national scale, with a view of distributing risks over the widest possible field. Under the present arrangements, it is left to the states. Many groups—including domestic servants and agricultural workers—are today outside of our state systems. "Groups which are invariably excluded," declares the author, "are precisely those in greatest need of protection."

Turning to old age annuities, Mr. Stewart declares that the huge reserve of \$47,000,000,000 which the act contemplates building up is "both unnecessary and dangerous." He makes out a strong case for health insurance.

The author lays no pretense to exhaustiveness and refers the readers to the volumes of Professor Armstrong, Abraham Epstein and others for more detailed studies. He has accomplished in an admirable fashion, however, the task he has set out to perform—that of presenting a popular, well reasoned, convincing volume on this problem of increasing importance for the wayfaring man.

L.